

European DesertNet

EUROPEAN NETWORK FOR GLOBAL DESERTIFICATION RESEARCH

www.european-desertnet.eu

European DesertNet Newsletter n. 3 – June 2008

Contents:

1. News from the Board of European DesertNet
2. News, Activities and Products of the Working Groups of European DesertNet and its partners
3. Important upcoming events
4. Publications 2008
5. Other information

1. News from the Board of European DesertNet

EPP-ED Hearing Desertification – Socio-economic, agricultural and forestry impacts and their political consequences

A one-day hearing on desertification, jointly organised by the EPP-ED Group and European DesertNet, took place on May 15, 2008, at the European Parliament. The meeting was chaired by Struan Stevenson, Chairman of WG "C", Vice-Chairman of the EPP-ED Group. Cristina Gutiérrez-Cortines, Deputy-Coordinator of the Environment Committee, Luca Marmo, Unit of Agriculture, Forests&Soil, Environment European Commission – DG Environment, numerous members of the European DesertNet Member States, third countries and students from Brussels University representatives of UNCCD, ICARDA/ICRISAT, DG JRC Ispra and the Global Mechanism participated in the hearing. The MEPs clearly emphasized that scientists should not only describe the phenomenon of desertification but start providing information to policy makers. European DesertNet is recognised as a necessary tool for strengthening such a science-policy interface at European and global levels. To date, this scientific network has 270 members from 46 countries. It was agreed upon at the hearing that the much discussed topic of climate change has also brought to light the issue of desertification, which is also becoming increasingly important for Europe. The statement that sums this up is, "the problem has come home". As a result, Europe should reinforce

its collaboration with already affected countries in order to create synergies in early action and to involve society in the preparation of comprehensive adaptation strategies. The discussions were supported by scientific presentations and working groups.

Policy can only react adequately to environmental and climate changes if there is scientifically sound data and information on changes in environmental thresholds and carrying capacities. At the hearing, scientists emphasized the importance of a stronger political commitment to expand research to come up with useful and standardised indicators and bio-physical and socio-economic monitoring mechanisms that can diagnose current land conditions and trends.

See the film on the hearing at: http://epp-ed.eu/vod/default.asp?VID=080516_event (Film courtesy: EPP-ED Group).

Mariam Akhtar-Schuster, Co-Chair of European DesertNet, Hamburg University, Germany



From right: Struan Stevenson, MEP and Joseph Daul, President of the EPP-ED Group. Photo courtesy: EPP-ED Group



Members of the Hearing at the European Parliament. Photo courtesy: EPP-ED Group

More photos available at:

World food security at stake – FAO takes the lead

Day-to-day facts clearly show that the global economy is entering a new crisis. Alarmist declarations from more and more numerous economists are growing. Two basic reasons are at stake: **the growing prices** of fossil energy (mainly oil) and **of crops**. The consequences upon developed countries are of course a concern in a global economic context. But needless to say, the second reason is a quite severe concern to all persons that live in arid and semi-arid lands prone to desertification – among the poorest people in the world. Reformist economic ideas are circulating to seriously tackle with this problem, certainly one of the most severe in the world.

In some African countries, for instance, the price of rice has more than doubled in a few months. Desperate “hunger riots” are unfortunately expected here and there.

So, **world food security** is a more and more pressing concern – in particular in the **Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) UN Agency** -

Jacques Diouf – its Director-General - called the attention of the international community in a paper entitled **"Soaring food prices- threat or opportunity?"**. He suggested a twin-track approach to solve the problem. The starting point is the creation of a favourable policy environment that would unite the private sector, farmers and traders. It would then be followed by programs that would ensure that small holder farmers have proper access to resources. Dr. Diouf stressed that the Millennium Development Goals (reducing by half extreme poverty and hunger in the world in 2015) could only be attained if agriculture can be boosted in developing countries in a sustainable way. **"The time for re-launching agriculture is now and the international community should not miss the opportunity"**.

FAO hosted a high-level international Conference on World Food Security and the Challenges of Climate Change and Bio-energy in Rome from June 3 to 5, 2008. The objective of this conference was to assist countries and the international community in finding sustainable solutions by identifying the policies, strategies and programmes required to safeguard world food security. Heads of State and Government and ministers discussed the current global food situation with soaring food prices, how climate change affects agriculture, and how agriculture can contribute to reduce climate change.

The event was planned to deliver the following:

- Identification of the new challenges facing **world food security**, supply and demand side, policies and market structure.
- A **better understanding** of the nexus between food security, climate change and bio-energy
- Identification of a process for **institutional action** for the integration of food security safeguards into international climate-related and sustainable bio-energy agreements.
- Discussion and adoption of **required policies**, strategies and programmes for ensuring world food security, in particular measures to address soaring food prices.
- A Declaration on **"World Food Security and required actions"**.

Such debates and such an event can only draw the utmost attention of the EDN members and stimulate its WG's.

FAO's Summit has concluded with the adoption by acclamation of a declaration calling on the international community to increase assistance for developing countries, in particular the least developed countries and those that are most negatively affected by high food prices. More information can be found at <http://www.fao.org/>.

Gerard BEGNI – Sources: FAO Website and various personal information.

News about the Union for the Mediterranean and the Mediterranean Scientific Area

In the EDN newsletter 2, we delivered some preliminary information about the so-called '**Union for the Mediterranean**' initiative. Things dramatically evolved in a few months – and perhaps we did not make a clear distinction about the political and the scientific initiative. Here are some elements to keep our readers posted about the most recent events of what could be an important opportunity for EDN.

From a political point of view, the German Chancellor Angela Merkel and the French President Nicolas Sarkozy successfully met together in Hanover on March 03, 2008 in order to find a common agreement about the Union for the Mediterranean ('An union of projects for a project of Union', as told by Ambassador Huntzinger). This paved the way to an endorsement of the initiative by the European Council, linking it to the Barcelona Process. The weak points of this process are well understood and analyzed all around the Mediterranean, so this new initiative is envisioned as an effort to bring required consolidations and reforms. It is now officially called: "Barcelona Convention: Union for the Mediterranean". All the EU members will be part of it. Its Presidency should be shared between one country from the 'North' and one from the 'South', which implies a fully shared participation – one of the weak points of the Barcelona process. Some specific features of the initial initiative such as the definition of innovative and flexible processes (including Public-Private Partnership) should be kept up, paving the way to a better involvement of the civil society.

From a scientific point of view, the Mediterranean Science Conference (CSM) to be held in Paris on June 26, 2008 will basically include two parts. The first one will be devoted to elaborate scientifically sound conclusions and recommendations to the Heads of States and Governments who should meet in Paris on July 13 & 14, based upon reports from three preparatory workshops held just before, as described in EDN newsletter 2. The second one is a meeting of 20 Academies of the Mediterranean world around the so-called GID (Inter-Academic Grouping for Development) nucleus, which will launch the Mediterranean Science Area under the top level moral authority of these Academies.

So, the "**Barcelona Convention: Union for the Mediterranean**" and the "**Mediterranean Science Area**" are still works in progress, but the way now appears as much more straight and clear. Desertification is a serious threat for Mediterranean countries. Scientific studies about this threat, sound definition and implementation of concrete action to combat it can only take great advantage of them. Several EDN members are deeply involved in the preparatory workshops and in the CSM.

Gerard BEGNI, Chairman, EDN Science/policy Interface WG – Jean-Louis DUCLUSAUD, Ministerial Correspondent in the EDN Users Board. Kindly reviewed by Pr. André CAPRON, member of the French Academy of Sciences, President of the GID.

UNESCO Chair at the International Centre for Eremology (ICE), Ghent University, Belgium

The International Centre of Eremology (ICE) (Director Prof. D. Gabriels) has received the honour to be selected for the establishment of a UNESCO Chair on Eremology (science of drylands and desertification)

The establishment of this UNESCO - Chair is a result of a longstanding cooperation with UNESCO in the field of science. The ICE supports through a science dedicated (Flanders/Belgium) trust fund, UNESCO in implementing activities in her scientific programmes of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC), the International Hydrological Programme (IHP), and Man and Biosphere (MAB). In the latter, the programme SUMAMAD (Sustainable Management of Marginal Drylands, the main focus is devoted to a better land and water management in arid and semi arid areas, with a special attention to improve the livelihood of the populations living in these drylands. A second UNESCO/PHI/Flanders Trust Funds project is CAZALAC (La Serena, Chili) where attention is given to research and education in drylands, the centre for water in arid and semi-arid zones of Latin America and the Caribbean



Inauguration at the Aula: Prof. D. Gabriels (left) is congratulated by Prof. Van Cauwenberghe, Rector of Ghent University, (right)

UNESCO recognised these efforts by the establishment of the UNESCO Chair on Eremology at the University of Ghent, Belgium. The inauguration ceremony of the UNESCO Chair on Eremology took place on Tuesday, January 22, 2008 at the Aula of the University of Ghent, Belgium. There were representatives of the International Panel of Climate Change (IPCC), UNESCO, EU-DG Research, UNEP, Development cooperation agencies and the Belgian governments. Keynote Speaker was Prof. Filippo Giorgi, Vice Chair of Working Group 1 of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (2007 Nobel Peace Prize).

This Chair opens possibilities for international cooperation and projects in the frame of the actual problem of climate change, causes of desertification and land degradation. It implies amongst other an active participation in world programmes of for instance the International Panel for Climate Change and the UN programme United Nations Convention for Combating Desertification (UNCCD).

The inauguration of the Chair was followed by a conference on desertification that paid special attention to recent research findings in this field, including methods and means to combat desertification.

About one milliard people in over 100 countries, mostly in Africa, are faced with desertification. Worldwide, 250 million are victims of the phenomena: poverty, hunger, diseases, conflicts and massive migration. Yearly about 10 million hectares of arable land are lost to the desert.

Gerard BEGNI, Chairman, EDN Science/policy Interface WG – Sources: IFAD & World Bank Websites, IFAD/10/08.

A major agreement between IFAD and the African Development Bank (AfDB)

Created in 1974, **IFAD (The International Fund for Agricultural Development)** a specialized agency of the United Nations, I as an international financial institution aiming at empowering poor rural women and men in developing countries to achieve higher incomes and improved food security by taking advantage of:

- Natural resources, especially secure access to land and water, and improved natural resource management and conservation practices
- Improved agricultural technologies and effective production services
- A broad range of financial services
- Transparent and competitive markets for agricultural inputs and produce
- Opportunities for rural off-farm employment and enterprise development
- Local and national policy and programming processes.

65% of the world's poorest people – some 800 million women, children and men - live in rural areas and depend on agriculture and related activities for their livelihoods. Those who live in arid and semi-arid areas prone to desertification are particularly endangered. Desertification can exhibit quite different features and request different and tailored combating solutions form one place to another in a limited geographic area. Working with rural poor people, governments, donors, non-governmental organizations and many other partners, **IFAD** focuses on country-specific solutions, which can involve increasing rural poor peoples' access to financial services, markets, technology, land and other natural resources.

Since 1978, IFAD has invested more than US\$ 10 billion in 766 projects and programmes that have reached more than 300 million poor rural people. A further US\$ 16.8 billion in co-financing was contributed by partners: Governments and other financing sources in recipient countries, including project participants, contributed US\$ 9.3 billion, and multilateral, bilateral and other donors provided approximately another US\$ 7.5 billion in co-financing. This represents **a total investment of about US\$ 26.8 billion**, and means that for every dollar IFAD invested, it was able to mobilize almost two dollars in additional resources.

UNCCD brings a specific attention to Africa. In 1978, **IFAD and the African Development Bank (AfDB)** organizations had signed their first cooperation agreement, which has been instrumental in guiding their work together and helping them mobilize co-financing of more than US\$2.4 billion for 35 projects. **On February 13, 2008, the two organizations signed a**

Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to strengthen their partnership as they work together to help poor rural people in Africa overcome poverty.

The MoU underscores IFAD's and AfDB's commitments to strengthening the alignment of their resources and instilling a culture of accountability for results in order to increase their development effectiveness in Africa. The enhanced relationship should serve as a model for other development partners in the context of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness.

Future cooperation efforts will focus on aligning the operational policies of IFAD and AfDB within their own organizations and in the countries in which they both have programmes and projects. This will increase the effectiveness and efficiency of their combined development assistance.

The MoU provides a framework the two organizations to design and implement work programmes within a number of thematic areas and sectors, including microfinance, capacity building, good governance, and post-conflict intervention. The partnership will support interventions in the fields of agribusiness and agro-processing, rural community empowerment, micro-enterprise development and renewable energy.

The two organizations will undertake joint missions to African countries to identify, prepare, appraise and supervise **projects** and will create **technical networks** to coordinate, monitor and evaluate **activities**. They will also implement **capacity building programmes** for professional and technical personnel of African governments.

This more than welcome agreement occurs in worrying circumstances. It is well known that the price of oil and crops is growing fast, endangering the survival of the poorest people in the world. According to the World Bank, poverty in the world could grow for two to three years, such leading some seven years back in extreme poverty eradication. Concerns over oil prices, energy security and climate change have prompted governments to increase bio-fuel production and use leading to greater demand for raw materials including: wheat, soy, maize and palm oil, thus contributing to the rise in food prices. Food price hikes are also linked to higher energy and fertilizer prices, a weak dollar and export bans.

IFAD tackles poverty not only as a lender, but also as an advocate for rural poor people. Its multilateral base provides a natural global platform to discuss important policy issues that influence the lives of rural poor people, as well as to draw attention to the centrality of rural development to meeting the **Millennium Development Goals**. This leads to consider that synergies could – and hence should - be found between **IFAD and EDN**.



Fig; 1 - Increase in rice prices, according to FAO reported by BBC. .

Gerard BEGNI, Chairman, EDN Science/policy Interface WG – Sources: IFAD & World Bank Websites, IFAD/10/08.

2. News, Activities and Products of the Working Groups of European DesertNet and its partners

A Statement of the Global Mechanism to European DesertNet

The Global Mechanism (GM) is very supportive to DesertNet and considers the network a useful tool for strengthening the global vision on both biophysical and socio-economic aspects of desertification as well as for developing a proactive approach with regard to the involvement of the European scientific community. DesertNet can play an effective role in:

- 1) lobbying at the European level by developing communication tools for raising awareness among European decision makers;
- 2) focussing research activities on responses to the immediate needs of local actors affected by desertification and drought, although this practice does not prevent the network from investigating within research thematic, such as: trade and desertification; consumption trends; and models of society, among others;
- 3) emphasising the socio-economic dimension of research in relation to the “development dimension” of the Convention to Combat Desertification.

DesertNet, as it is now an international network, could also play a significant role in developing cooperation with scientific communities of the south so to contribute, *inter alia*, to the development of appropriate communication tools for raising awareness among national decision makers.

Finally, the GM expects DesertNet to continue cooperation with CST/CCD in light of the 10 year strategy adopted by the Conference of the Parties, in Madrid, in October 2007.

Global Mechanism/U.N. Convention to Combat Desertification <http://www.globalmechanism.org>

By Youssef Brahim, Programme Coordinator North Africa & South-South Cooperation

3. Important upcoming events

List of links to 2008 meetings regarding desertification, water conservation and land degradation.

8-10 June	Land Degradation Processes, Dynamics of Land Degradation. http://www.taolin.com.tw/comland/comland.html	Taiwan and Japan
14-18 July	Second International Conference on Ground Bio- and Eco-engineering: The Use of Vegetation to Improve Slope Stability http://icgbe2.cirad.fr/	Beijing, China
14 Jun – 14 Sept	Expo Zaragoza 2008 ‘Water and Sustainable Development’ http://www.expozaragoza2008.es/	Zaragoza, Spain

30 June-4 July	On- & off-site environ. impacts of runoff and erosion http://la.cesam.ua.pt/cost634/cost_leaflet.pdf	Portugal
20-23 July	9th In conference on precision agriculture http://www.icpaonline.org/	USA
26-30 July	Soil and Water Conservation Society http://www.swcs.org/en/conferences/2008_annual_conference/	Tucson, AZ. USA
7-11 August	Applying Ecological Economics for Social and Environmental Sustainability http://www.ecoeco.org/conferences.php	Nairobi, Kenya
25-29 August	EUROSOIL Congress http://www.ecsss.net/web/frontend/view.php?MENUEID=230	Vienna, Austria
25-28 August	Adaptation of Forests and Forest Management to Changing Climate with Emphasis on Forest Health: A Review of Science, Policies, and Practices. http://www.cifor.cgiar.org/Events/CIFOR/conference_sweden.htm	Umeå, Sweden
1-3 Sept	GeoCart'2008 CARTOGRAPHIC CONFERENCE http://www.cartography.org.nz/geocart2008/	Auckland, New Zealand
30 Sept – 3 Oct	3rd Global Workshop on Digital Soil Mapping http://dsmusa.org/	Utah, USA
10-21 Sept	UNESCO-IHE Regular Short Course: Spate Irrigation and Water Management under Drought and Water Scarcity http://www.unesco.org/water/water_events/Detailed/1598.shtml	Delft, The Netherlands
12-14 Sept	International Conference on Ecosystems, Environment and Sustainable Development http://www.waset.org/eesd08/	Heidelberg, Germany
18-22 Sept	5th International conference on land degradation http://www.geocities.com/eswaranpadma/5ICLD.pdf	Bari, Italy
5-9 Oct	ASA-CSSA-SSSA International annual meeting https://www.acsmeetings.org/	USA
5-14 Oct	The World Conservation Congress http://www.iucn.org/congress/2008/	Barcelona, Spain
7-10 Nov	9th International Dryland Development Conference http://www.icarda.org/Announcement/2008/9th-IDDC/9th-IDDC_FirstAnn.htm	Alexandria, Egypt
12-14 Nov	Digital Earth Summit on Geoinformatics: Tools for Global Change Research Deadline for early registration: 01. July 2008 http://www.isde-summit-2008.org	Potsdam, Germany
14-17 Dec	Deserts, Drylands and Desertification http://cmsprod.bgu.ac.il/Eng/Units/bidr/desertification2008/	Israel

The Environment Directorate-General of the European Commission is pleased to announce that it will host a high-level conference in Brussels on Thursday 12th June 2008 on the interrelations between soil and climate change and on the possible role of soil management in climate change mitigation and adaptation.

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/soil/conf_en.htm

Maria José Marqués Pérez, member of the Advisory Board of European DesertNet, IMIDRA, Spain

Seminar on "Salinidad y disponibilidad de agua ante la perspectiva de cambio climático"

to be held in Valencia, Spain 1-3 October 2008. Language is Spanish.

Complete information can be found at:

http://www.uimp.es/uimp/home/homeUIMPdina.php?jcj=ACADEMICAS_FICHA&juj=2003&jpj=IdActividad=7870314&pg=2&orden=6

4. Publications 2008

A list of recently published selected paper regarding desertification:

1. Ke, Z., Xia, C., Tan, B.P., 2008. Toward an improved legislative framework for China's land degradation control. *Natural Resources Forum* 32, 11-24.
2. Lee, H.F., Zhang, D.D., 2008. Perceiving the environment from the lay perspective in desertified areas, northern china. *Environmental Management* 41, 168-182.
3. Man, T.E., Modra, C., 2008. Drought impact of environment and agricultural products. *Journal of Environmental Protection and Ecology* 9, 70-76.
4. Niang, A.J., Ozer, A., Ozer, P., 2008. Fifty years of landscape evolution in Southwestern Mauritania by means of aerial photos. *Journal of Arid Environments* 72, 97-107.
5. Oba, G., Sjaastad, E., Roba, H.G., 2008. Framework for participatory assessments and implementation of global environmental conventions at the community level. *Land Degradation & Development* 19, 65-76.
6. Smakhtin, V.U., Schipper, E.L.F., 2008. Droughts: The impact of semantics and perceptions. *Water Policy* 10, 131-143.
7. Smith, M.S., 2008. The 'desert syndrome' - causally-linked factors that characterise outback Australia. *Rangeland Journal* 30, 3-14.
8. Stringer, L., 2008. Can the UN Convention to Combat Desertification guide sustainable use of the world's soils? *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment* 6, 138-144.
9. Thomas, R.J., 2008. 10th Anniversary Review: Addressing land degradation and climate change in dryland agroecosystems through sustainable land management. *Journal of Environmental Monitoring* 10, 595-603.

Maria José Marqués Pérez, member of the Advisory Board of European DesertNet, IMIDRA, Spain

Publication "Ecology, Spatial Distribution, and Utilization of the Tugai Vegetation at the Middle reaches of the Tarim River, Xinjiang, China" (2007)

The most undisturbed Tugai forests (i.e. riparian forests of Central Asia) are distributed along the Tarim River with the key-stone species *Populus euphratica*. The prerequisites for conservation are river dynamics, sufficient groundwater levels, and efficient measures to curb land reclamation in the existing nature reserves. The river dynamics creates sites for germination of *P. euphratica* and drives the succession of the Tugai forests. The maximum groundwater level for *P. euphratica* is 13 m below surface.

The Author Niels Thevs (University of Greifswald, Germany) published impressive research findings on the Tugai Forests in the book "Ecology, Spatial Distribution, and Utilization of the Tugai Vegetation at the Middle reaches of the Tarim River, Xinjiang, China". For more information contact the author at: Niels.Thevs@uni-greifswald.de

5. Other Information

Water resource deficit in the Pyrenees Mountains and surrounding regions.

While **Spain is severely threatened by desertification**, France does not consider it significant on its territory. While being one of the major promoters of the UNCCD (which was signed in Paris), France did not sign the Annex 5 of the Convention and does not set up a National Action Plan (NAP). So, the Pyrenees Mountains appear as a 'political limit' of desertification in Western Europe, which is roughly true although a bit simplistic from a physical point of view.

The Pyrenees Mountains, which culminates at 3404 m in Spain, form a natural and complex boundary between France and the Iberian Peninsula. They **are submitted to complex climatic influences**, such as the Mediterranean climate in East, the humid Atlantic influence in West, and the growing dryness (and associated desertification processes) that characterizes climate trends in Spain in the in South. These conflicting influences can be clearly perceived in Pyrenean landscapes. At a given longitude, there are most often high and often sudden contrasts between greening landscapes in the North and arid landscapes in the South, and a progressive wetness and greenness gradient from East to West.

As almost everywhere in the world, glaciers retreat and reduction of snowy areas in time and space are a clear signature of global warming and its regional features.

According to preliminary observations released by Meteo-France end of February 2008, the winter 2007-2008 was the sunniest one in France since 1950, and one of the ten warmest ones since 1900. National average temperatures were 1.1 °C above the mean values. This national trend has been especially significant in the South-West region, where the sun exposure time was significantly higher than the average. **The Pyrenees Mountains exhibit a severe water deficit** (as well as the Mediterranean rim).

As a consequence, **desertification in the Southern side can be exacerbated**. This phenomenon could be amplified by a massive human abandonment making adaptation works not maintained. On the Northern side, desertification phenomena will be less severe and limited to some local hotspots, but the decrease of available water reserves will contribute to **making**

unsustainable some highly irrigated crops like maize and leading to **changes in agricultural practices**.

Gerard BEGNI, Chairman, EDN Science/policy Interface WG



Recession of the 'Ossoue Glacier' over one century. This glacier is located on the French side of the Vignemale, culminating at 3298 m on the Spanish/French border. (Personal collection G. Begni)

Sources: Meteo-France quoted by AFP & various documentation collected by the author.

The Equator Prize 2008

Awarded biennially, the Equator Prize recognizes community-based initiatives that demonstrate extraordinary achievement in reducing poverty through the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in the equatorial belt. Details on the criteria for the Prize, information on the award process, and the online nomination system can be accessed through the Equator Initiative website at www.equatorinitiative.org.

María José Marqués Pérez, member of the Advisory Board of European DesertNet, IMIDRA, Spain

WOCAT Knowledge Base

The WOCAT knowledge base is a public domain, i.e. everyone is invited to share it and use it. The WOCAT network is open to all individuals and organisations with a mandate or an interest in Soil and Water Conservation. <http://www.wocat.net/default.asp>

WOCAT has developed tools to document, monitor and evaluate SWC know-how and to disseminate it around the globe in order to facilitate exchange of experience.

We are happy to announce that the updated basic questionnaires on SLM Technologies (QT) and SLM Approaches (QA) and the updated map questionnaire (QM) are all available now. Please download them from the WOCAT website (www.wocat.net/quest.asp).

Maria José Marqués Pérez, member of the Advisory Board of European DesertNet, IMIDRA, Spain

Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP9)

At the 9th meeting of CBD COP in Bonn, Germany (19-30 May 2008) the Conference of the Parties discussed *Biodiversity of Dry and Sub-Humid Lands* and encouraged activities for conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. The Conference of the Parties also *requests* the Executive Secretary e.g. to strengthen collaboration between the conventions on the assessment of status, trends and threats in dry and sub-humid lands.

International Union of Soil Sciences (IUSS) - 5 Questions to a Soil Scientist

Interview to Pandi Zdruli, Senior Research Scientist at CIHEAM – Bari and EDN member available at:

<http://www.iuss.org/popup/Zdruli.htm> .

Read more interviews at <http://www.iuss.org/pages/people.htm>

UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD)

At its 16th session at UN headquarters in New York (5-16 May 2008), the CSD reviewed the topic Agriculture, Desertification and rural development in Africa. For more information contact:

<http://www.iisd.ca/csd/csd16/>

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